

## QUICK RAGU

Ingredients (approximate quantities, serves 4-6):

2 tbs. Extra-virgin olive oil (optional)  
1 lb. high-quality ground beef (or beef, veal, pork mixture)  
1 c. chopped onion  
1/2 c. chopped carrot  
1 tbs. fennel seed, or to taste  
1 tbs. crushed red pepper, or to taste  
1 tsp. salt, or to taste  
1 tsp. ground black pepper, or to taste  
1 qt concentrated tomatoes  
Fresh basil (or parsley, or other herb) to taste (lots)

1. If your beef is very lean (less than 15% fat), use the optional olive oil. Otherwise, in a large heavy saucepan, cook beef over medium heat until brown, breaking up into small pieces.
2. Add onion, carrot and celery and cook until wilted and fragrant, 2-3 minutes.
3. Add spices (fennel, red pepper, salt, black pepper). Stir well.
4. Add tomatoes, stir well. Return to boil, reduce heat to medium.
5. Cook about 10 minutes under partial cover until slightly reduced. Stir occasionally. Beware splattering, reduce heat if necessary.
6. Remove heat, add basil, stir to combine.

Serve over pasta with grated parmesan cheese. Enjoy!

Variation: use a sturdy pasta, e.g. rigatoni or penne. Cook pasta to just barely al dente. Reserve about 1 c. of boiled salty pasta liquid before draining. Add drained pasta and reserved liquid to finished sauce, stir to combine, and heat briefly to combine. Serve with grated cheese.

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